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Immediate Release

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Environment Department Seeks Public Comment on Upper Rio Chama Water Quality

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), Surface Water Quality Bureau (SWQB) will hold a community meeting in Tierra Amarilla July 24th to present information and seek public comment regarding water quality in the Upper Rio Chama watershed, in the north central portion of the state.

The public meeting will be held Thursday, July 24, 2003 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the Commissioner's Chambers of the Rio Arriba County Complex in Tierra Amarilla (located at Main Street and Hwy 162, across from the County Courthouse, approximately 11 miles south of Chama).

The SWQB will discuss draft "total maximum daily loads," or TMDLs, for the watershed. A TMDL is a planning document that establishes specific goals for water quality conditions. It includes reduction estimates for pollutants currently exceeding state surface water standards, as well as an implementation plan suggesting what actions might be implemented to restore or protect the health of the waterbody.

Portions of the Upper Rio Chama watershed have exceeded state standards for chronic aluminum, temperature, turbidity, and stream bottom deposits.

The 30-day public comment period on these TMDLs began July 15, 2003 and ends August 13, 2003 at 5:00 p.m. mountain daylight time. Final Upper Rio Chama watershed TMDLs will be submitted to the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission for their formal approval at the regularly scheduled public meeting tentatively set for September 9, 2003.

For more information, contact Lynette Guevara, in NMED's SWQB, at (505) 827-2904, or Jon Goldstein, NMED Communications Director at (505) 827-0314. The draft TMDLs are available upon request and are also posted on the SWQB's website, which can be found at:

www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb/swqb.html

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